



## **USAID Development Information Services**

### **USAID's Experience with Multisectoral Partnerships and Strategic Alliances:**

### **An Analysis of Best Practices and Lessons Learned**

Prepared for the U.S. Agency for International Development

by

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## **PREFACE**

On May 10, 2001, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell announced the Global Development Alliance (GDA) as USAID's business model for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. As USAID's first pillar, the GDA is based on the Agency's recognition of significant changes in the assistance environment. No longer are governments, international organizations, and multilateral development banks the only assistance donors. Rather, over the past 20 years, NGOs, PVOs, cooperatives, foundations, corporations, the higher education community, and even individuals now provide development assistance. As a result, the U.S. Government is not the only, or perhaps even the largest, source of U.S. resources being applied to the development challenge. For further information on GDA, visit USAID's GDA web site at <http://www.usaid.gov/gda>.

USAID is strongly committed to developing strategic alliances which will leverage significant resources, expertise, creative approaches and new technologies to address issues of poverty, hunger, disease, overpopulation, illiteracy, environmental degradation, democracy and governance, natural disasters, and conflict.

This document was prepared at the request of USAID's Bureau for Policy and Program Coordination (PPC), in conjunction with the newly installed GDA Secretariat. PPC and the GDA team called for a systematic review of Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC) documentation on activities identifying the Agency's experiences in public-private alliances, from 1990 to the present. The following analysis of best practices and lessons learned is a result of this document review, as is the related document, "USAID Global Development Alliance (GDA) Predecessor Activity Inventory."

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ACRONYM LIST .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>I. COOPERATION FOR CHANGE .....</b>	<b>1</b>
A RECENT HISTORY OF USAID APPROACHES TO PARTNERSHIP .....	1
<b>II. METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>3</b>
INVENTORY OF USAID’S GDA AND MULTISECTORAL PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES.....	4
<b>III. BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED.....</b>	<b>5</b>
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS .....	5
USAID EXPERIENCE.....	6
1. <i>Initial Planning and Cooperation</i> .....	6
2. <i>Creating a Common Agenda – Planning Early and Together</i> .....	6
3. <i>Operational Roadmap</i> .....	7
4. <i>Building Partner Relationships</i> .....	8
A. Sufficient Time for Relationship Building.....	9
B. Open Communication .....	9
C. Transparent and Inclusive Management Practices .....	9
5. <i>Accountability</i> .....	10
6. <i>Measuring Progress</i> .....	10
7. <i>Building Institutional Capacity of Partners</i> .....	11
SCOPE OF USAID PARTNERSHIPS AND ALLIANCES.....	12
EXTERNAL FACTORS .....	12
LEVERAGING RESOURCES .....	13
BUILDING ON EXPERIENCE .....	14
SUSTAINABILITY .....	14
<b>IV. OVERVIEW OF BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>APPENDIX A .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>APPENDIX B.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>ENDNOTES.....</b>	<b>21</b>

## ACRONYM LIST

AIHA.....	American International Health Alliance
ANE.....	Asia & the Near East
CEZ .....	Czech Power Works Company
CRM.....	Coastal Resources Management
DEC.....	USAID’s Development Experience Clearinghouse
E&E.....	Europe & Eurasia
ESF.....	Emergency Social Fund (Bolivia)
G/PHN.....	USAID’s Global Bureau for Population, Health, and Nutrition
GDA .....	Global Development Alliance
HL&P .....	Houston Lighting and Power
IPP .....	Institutional Partnership Project (Russia)
IRCP.....	International Resource Cities Program
LAC.....	Latin America & the Caribbean
MOU.....	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO .....	Nongovernmental Organization
NPI .....	New Partnerships Initiative
PiP .....	Partners in Peril
PPC.....	USAID’s Bureau for Policy and Program Cooperation
PROFIT .....	Promoting Financial Investments and Transfers
PURSE .....	Private Participation in Urban Services
PVC .....	USAID’s Office of Private and Voluntary Cooperation
PVO.....	Private Voluntary Organization
SEATS.....	Service Expansion and Technical Support
TCAPP .....	Technology Cooperation Agreement Pilot Project
TVE .....	Technical Vocational Education Improvement program
UDL.....	University Development Linkages
US-AEP .....	United States–Asia Environmental Partnership
USAID.....	United States Agency for International Development

## I. COOPERATION FOR CHANGE

Assistance to the developing world has traditionally involved a single funding agency (i.e., a government, foundation, international organization, or NGO) and a single implementing organization. Over the past decade, however, the development community increasingly is taking part in innovative joint initiatives that seek to collaboratively address pressing development issues. In effect, the need to achieve focused goals with fewer resources has driven many donor agencies, including USAID, to consider new ways of doing business.

Working together with the public and private sectors is not a new concept for USAID. In fact, Agency missions throughout the developing world have implemented a number of successful multisectoral partnerships over the years, and they continue to do so today. Most recently, USAID has begun to expand upon the idea of ‘partnership’ by entering into *strategic alliances* with other international donors, private companies, and foundations.

### **Box 1. What is meant by the term “strategic alliance?”**

Strategic alliances differ from traditional forms of partnership between the public and private sectors. They are not one-time philanthropic relationships in which the private sector simply donates funds to a specific cause. Rather they are longer-term, collaborative activities in which both partners bring together complementary strengths and comparable resources (monetary, technical, or in-kind) in order to address a common set of goals and objectives.

### **A Recent History of USAID Approaches to Partnership**

*Multisectoral partnerships.* In 1995 the Agency launched the New Partnerships Initiative (NPI), a concept that promoted an integrated approach to sustainable development through strategic partnering (information about NPI can be found at <http://www.usaid.gov/pubs/npi/index.html>). In the NPI concept, USAID supported the creation and implementation of partnerships between local government, local business, and local civil society organizations.<sup>1</sup> In the majority of cases, USAID has not itself been a member of the partnerships; rather, its main position has been to foster sustainable relationships between host-country public and private sectors.

*USAID as a Broker.* Over the past several years, USAID has also facilitated expanded assistance by matching private industry interests with those of PVOs and NGOs. As more and more multinational corporations realize their role as responsible “corporate citizens,” particularly within the countries they operate, USAID has begun to act as a broker between these businesses and the PVO/NGO sector. Through its Office of Private and Voluntary Cooperation (PVC), USAID has facilitated a number of partnerships between the PVO/NGO community and businesses by providing modest facilitating funds and acting as a clearinghouse and referral service. USAID has not taken an active role in the partnership, once it is formed, so the

development activity proposed by the industry–nonprofit partnership need not fall within USAID’s own development goals and objectives.

*Global Development Alliance (GDA).* GDA is the Agency’s newest business model, announced in the spring of 2001 by Administrator Andrew Natsios. The GDA approach differs from USAID’s other forms of partnering in that it assembles public and private donors to work together in order to jointly address development issues. These strategic partnerships (a.k.a. “alliances”) among USAID, the private sector, other international donor agencies, NGOs, or all three, are not merely philanthropic in nature, whereby corporations or private foundations donate funds to a specific USAID project. Rather, USAID’s GDA activities are based on the innovative idea that each partner brings comparable resources to the joint initiative, whether it be monetary, technical, or in-kind. The underlying premise is that by combining the complementary strengths and resources of each partner, a relationship ensues that generates greater overall benefits to beneficiaries than any of the partners could ever produce using the same resources alone.

It is important to note that GDA is *not meant to be a substitute* for the Agency’s strategy to foster and take part in multisectoral partnerships. Quite the opposite, the GDA model is an augmentation of the fundamental idea behind multisectoral partnering, which is engaging in increased collaboration between the public and private sectors in order to achieve focused goals with fewer resources. Further information about GDA can be found at <http://www.usaid.gov/gda>.

#### **Box 2. USAID’s GDA Precursors in Action**

In response to the Hurricane Mitch disaster, USAID teamed up with a number of private organizations and public agencies to donate, transport, and install five bridges (valued at US \$1.5 million) in Puerto Castilla, Honduras. Seven different organizations were involved in transporting the bridges to Honduras and getting them in place. The State of Florida donated the bridges, Landstar Express funded their transport within the United States, Dole transported them without charge to Honduras, and a USAID/Honduras Social Investment Fund contractor took care of transportation within Honduras to the installation sites.

## II. METHODOLOGY

USAID's strategy of multisectoral partnering, and more recently GDA alliances, has bolstered its ability to connect itself with civil society, the international business community, and government institutions in order to come up with more innovative ways to address critical development issues.

In many ways, the differences between the public and private sectors are the very source of the strength of multisectoral partnerships<sup>2</sup> and alliances. However, establishing and maintaining these collaborative efforts as a development approach has not been without challenges. Establishing effective partnerships is seldom straightforward. In the Agency's effort to promote more affiliations with and between the public and private sectors, the question is now being asked: How can the challenges be managed and opportunities maximized?

Based on USAID's broad experience in fostering and engaging in multisectoral partnerships, as well as its recent experience with strategic alliances, this report makes an effort to present the ever-expanding list of the Agency's best practices and lessons learned that may be helpful in beginning to answer this question.

The best practices and lessons presented in this document have been extracted from program documents (1990–present) housed in the USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC) database. While every effort was made to conduct an all-inclusive literature review of Agency activities involving multisectoral partnerships and strategic alliances, several restrictions precluded such an endeavor. First, DEC holdings are limited to only those USAID-funded documents that have been submitted; second, there are partnership and alliance activities in place that have not yet been evaluated; and third, the pre-determined search terms used to seek out relevant documents may have excluded, inadvertently, certain partnership activities (see Appendix A for a list of these terms). Given these factors, the information offered is meant to be an illustrative, rather than exhaustive, analysis of lessons learned.

In addition, it must be pointed out that USAID's experience in partnering activities has been more extensive in the category of fostering and brokering multisectoral partnerships than it has been in implementing GDA alliances. The latter type of activity, in which resources are leveraged between USAID and public/private partners, is relatively new. While USAID has implemented GDA-like activities in the past, a limited number of documents exist that speak to the issue of lessons learned for current GDA activities.

With this in mind, this analysis is based primarily on the Agency's familiarity with multisectoral partnerships. However, it can and should be argued that the majority of best practices and lessons derived from USAID's efforts to promote multisectoral partnerships are indeed applicable to GDA activities as well. Supplemental points in support of this are presented throughout this paper.

## **Inventory of USAID’s GDA and Multisectoral Partnership Activities**

A separate, but related document that is meant to accompany this analysis paper is the retrospective inventory of USAID multisectoral partnership and GDA-like alliance activities, entitled “USAID Global Development Alliance (GDA) Predecessor Inventory, 1990–present.” An extensive DEC database search resulted in a series of documents from which this descriptive list of partnership and alliance activities was formulated.



### **III. BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED**

#### **Summary of Findings**

The most fundamental lesson learned from USAID's experience in promoting multisectoral partnerships and forming GDA-like alliances has been that most, if not all, collaborating agencies benefit more from combining their efforts and resources than they would had they acted alone.<sup>3</sup>

As just one example of this, the Coastal Resources Management program (CRM) reports that "multi-sectoral implementation groups formed at the provincial level can provide a mechanism to consolidate resources and technical capacity available from local government units, national government agencies, academic institutions, and non-governmental organizations to help municipalities achieve ... critical coastal resource management results."<sup>4</sup>

Partnerships between the public and private sectors typically blend complementary assets (e.g., the productive capacity of business and the social organizing capacity of civil society).<sup>5</sup> Each partner brings its own set of strengths and relevant experiences to the partnership, which typically results in the creation of new and innovative ways to address long-standing development problems, such as alleviating poverty and improving health and education.

This review of USAID partnering activities reveals a series of common themes surrounding the elements necessary to create, manage, and sustain successful partnerships. Thus, despite one Agency evaluation's assertion that "there are no prescriptions" for creating and sustaining successful partnerships,<sup>6</sup> the existence of corresponding attributes observed in this study strongly suggests that there is, in fact, a collective set of best practices and lessons learned that constitutes a demonstrative partnering model.

Characteristics frequently used to describe the nature of effective USAID partnership activities, past and present, include the following:

- dedication to a common goal
- good communication between partners
- flexibility and patience
- adequate time to shape the partnership
- transparent and inclusive management practices

Without these and other vital components, USAID partnerships between the public and private sectors would in all likelihood fall short of intended results and in some cases perhaps be destined to fail.

## USAID Experience

### *1. Initial Planning and Cooperation*<sup>\*</sup>

The first stage in convening a partnership activity, according to USAID experience, is the most crucial. The preliminary focus must be on *determining the appropriateness of the proposed relationship*<sup>7</sup> (e.g., are the partners compatible?). Is each partner credible within its respective sector? Does each possess the financial and technical resources needed to ensure success? Making certain that the proper organizations are involved in the joint endeavor is a critical first step. This includes not only partners currently involved, but also those that may become necessary at a later time in the relationship. Additionally, in order to ensure success, each potential partner must be willing and able to exhibit readiness to compromise, do business openly with other partners, and be respectful.

Assessing a potential partners' capacity and resources is an important consideration. As was reported in one USAID evaluation document, a local partner may be ill equipped to play the pivotal role assigned to them. The findings reported on India's land development activities, for instance, suggest that a number of local government authorities involved may have lacked a sufficient resource base with which to uphold their end of collaborative efforts with the private sector.<sup>8</sup>

A method of assessing potential partners' capacity has been formulated by APTLink. This USAID partnership activity recommends that each organization develop a predetermined list of criteria for selecting its partners. For instance, based on its own activities in developing agro-processing and trade linkages in developing countries, APTLink believes it is important to:

- begin with a good and knowledgeable counterpart contact in-country;
- select honest, reliable, and financially strong partners; and
- find partners who are motivated to cultivate a long-term relationship.<sup>9</sup>

While each partner's standards for choosing a counterpart depends on the distinctiveness of each individual activity, APTLink's list presents three fundamental starting points that could be utilized by other potential partnership and alliance activities.

### *2. Creating a Common Agenda – Planning Early and Together*

One USAID partnership activity maintains that the process of developing multiple stakeholder partnerships not only takes time, but is also most effective when a common agenda, good communication, and mutual trust are the focus.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>\*</sup> For more information on the steps to forming an effective partnership, see *A User's Guide to Intersectoral Partnering* (1998) by Chanya Charles, Stephanie McNulty, and John Pennell. This document is available electronically at: <http://www.usaid.gov/pubs/isp/handbook/guide.html>.

An inherent difficulty in building partner relationships lies in the discrepancies found in what each partner views as its primary goals and objectives. In order to work through what is often a set of conflicting priorities between the public and private sectors, the majority of USAID partnership activities studied affirm that *mutual planning* is the first step necessary in building a durable relationship among partners.

The PURSE project in Indonesia, for instance, reports that “the key to structuring private-public participation transactions is generally to find a balance between the social equity agenda of the government ... and the risk reduction requirements of the private investors and their lenders.”<sup>11</sup> The act of finding this “balance” in the development of mutually beneficial goals and objectives is necessary from the *early stages* of the partnering process. As was the case with USAID/Russia’s Institutional Partnership Project (IPP), partners jointly established practical goals early on in the beginning of their collaborative efforts, and all subsequent activities were built upon these initial goals.<sup>12</sup>

### **Box 3. Benefits of Shared Ownership**

The USAID activity supported by G/PHN and USAID Brazil, Promoting Financial Investments and Transfer (PROFIT), maintains that its efforts were enhanced when the partners themselves were responsible for designing and implementing the strategies for their subprojects. In Zimbabwe, for instance, PROFIT utilized a participatory approach to enable private providers and employers to identify constraints to their participation in the provision of family planning services. They formulated specific technical assistance needs and programs to address their need for training, financial resources, and equipment. By taking responsibility for defining and addressing their own needs, the beneficiaries became the owners of the partnerships, rather than passive recipients of external assistance.

In addition, the ultimate goals of the relationship must be considered as valuable to each partner. USAID’s Environmental Partnerships for Economic Development activity, for example, maintains that “what is needed is to find the common ground where both [partners] feel their contributions can have a lasting effect.”<sup>13</sup> It is essential that each partner views the goals and objectives as worth pursuing, particularly when there are significant costs associated with participation in the partnership or alliance.

### **3. Operational Roadmap**

As has been USAID’s experience, successful partnerships tend to be centered around a shared vision that preserves the relationship and aids partners in transcending the difficulties that may arise from different operating styles.<sup>14</sup> However, coordinating daily operations of a partnership, in particular if partners are from different sectors, can be a time-consuming process that requires patience. A work plan, or operational roadmap, must be developed that clearly delineates the roles and responsibilities of each partner.

In the case of multidonor partnership activities, such as the Benin Rural Water Supply project, it was found that greater specificity in planning the internal workings of the alliance was required. This is based on the premise that the more partners involved in a joint activity, the greater the chances for disagreements in the overall operational strategy. Careful attention and sufficient documentation should be provided on the participating agency roles, authorities, and responsibilities to avoid project management conflict.<sup>15</sup>

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by all partners is a mechanism by which partners can formalize their commitment to the initiative's mission and operational roadmap. To read the MOU between USAID and The Specialty Coffee Institute, see Appendix B.

#### 4. *Building Partner Relationships*

Once the decision has been made to enter a collaborative relationship, and partners have begun their daily and long-term operations, the next important step, as indicated by USAID experience, is the ongoing process of *building partner relationships*, both formal and informal. This endeavor is complex and as important to the success of a partnership as any single aspect of preliminary research or planning.<sup>16</sup> Many of the factors noted below address issues of governance that arise in alliances or partnerships.

The process of building a relationship between public and private partners is not always easy. In some cases, partners may not be natural allies. In addition to bringing individual strengths to the partnership, they may also bring negative perceptions about the other sector.

For instance, USAID's American International Health Alliance (AIHA) partnership program in Slovakia uncovered a perception remaining from the Communist era. In this case, the very notion that private charities could successfully collaborate with the government was a revolutionary idea.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, a recent evaluation document for this activity indicates that it is not clear "whether cultural difficulties of private organizations working with government offices will succeed in the long run, or whether they will go their separate way."<sup>18</sup> This brand of mistrust clearly could have a negative impact on the short- and long-term outcomes of AIHA, as well as other USAID partnership and alliance activities.

Another Agency program recommends that new partnerships between the public and private sectors *articulate and try to understand the differences and concerns* of each partner.<sup>19</sup> To ignore or deny them might lead to false expectations and block collaborative efforts. Partners, therefore, must begin negotiations by remaining realistic about their differences, whether they are sectoral in nature, are based on conflicting goals, or stem from negative preconceptions.

Partners must also work together to better understand how their differences can in fact strengthen the partnership. The Micronutrient Initiative, for example, conveys that collaboration need not imply public and private partners see eye-to-eye on every issue. What it does mean, however, is that every effort should be made to keep both partners focused on activities of mutual benefit.<sup>20</sup> The sectors need to speak to each other on a continual basis, which includes talking about differing priorities.

Based on USAID experience, the most straightforward methods to developing mutual trust are ensuring that the partnership or alliance has (a) sufficient time for relationship building, (b) open communication, and (c) transparent and inclusive management practices.

#### **A. Sufficient Time for Relationship Building**

Incubating a partnership takes time. USAID's experience specifies that partners should be willing and able to commit themselves for an extended period of time in order to nurture the relationship. In the case of AIHA, for example, it was recommended that the entire first year be devoted to building relationships in order to allow time for the partnership to coalesce.<sup>21</sup> Further, AIHA maintains that generally it is not until the second year, after relationships have been established, that the real work of the partnership begins. Its own partnerships are intended to last three years; however, by the end of this period AIHA found that many partnerships had only just begun to flourish.

Likewise, in the course of USAID's Bolivian Emergency Social Fund (ESF) activity, which has been a multidonor effort since 1986, it has been determined that funders should maintain support in the partnership for a minimum of five to six years.<sup>22</sup> This is presumably to incorporate a greater sense of stability in the program.

#### **B. Open Communication**

Opportunities for successful collaboration can be hindered by a lack of communication between public and private sector partners. This could be based on misunderstandings at the sectoral level, or the result of other internal and external factors. No matter what the source, a number of USAID partnership activities assert that effective and constant communication between partners is crucial for the continued success of a relationship. The Onchocerciasis Control Program, for instance, notes that an "unrestricted flow of information between all parties concerned" was one reason for its partnership's success.<sup>23</sup>

In some cases, it may be useful to bring in an intermediary to assist partners in the initial phases of communications. For instance, an evaluation of one USAID GDA alliance activity, the Millennium Alliance for Social Investment, states that "the construction and maintenance of productive alliances is extremely complex, and requires a facilitator that can effectively communicate each partner's goals and needs across different sectors, levels, languages and cultures."<sup>24</sup> Yet, another partnership activity, CRM, in the same way suggests that hiring a consultant can in fact provide fresh insights in project design and implementation.<sup>25</sup>

#### **C. Transparent and Inclusive Management Practices**

The management approach used in partnerships and alliances is crucial. As the Coastal Resources Management Program (CRM) reports, "the strategy means nothing if large numbers of people at the local level remain uninvolved in the effort."<sup>26</sup> Partners may not always be identical in size, assets, or capability, but the outcome from collaborative efforts appears to be more substantial when decision-making on the direction and management of joint activities is shared.<sup>27</sup> This is an extension of the need for partners to plan out their work together in the

beginning stages of the relationship. USAID's experience has been that partnerships work more effectively when management systems are transparent and inclusive.

Achieving a balance of power, however, within a partnership or alliance can at times be challenging. USAID's University Development Linkages project (UDL), for instance, acknowledges that many of its own partnerships are unequal in the sense that the U.S. partner often dominates the decision-making process.<sup>28</sup> An assessment of UDL found that this problem could be uniformly corrected by establishing a system in which partners *jointly* set objectives, work plans, and budgets, and in which reports on performance are prepared collaboratively. A specific recommendation made by the evaluators of UDL included integrating a system in which every important document—including a partnership's original proposal, annual work plans and budgets, and quarterly and annual reports—is signed off by each partner. In the case of UDL, it was considered that an inclusive process would limit the chances for decisions being made without input from developing country partners,<sup>29</sup> and this lesson can benefit other partnerships and alliances as well.

USAID's United States–Asia Environmental Partnership (US–AEP) is another case in point. A lesson learned from this substantial GDA activity, which is an initiative promoting environmentally sustainable development in Asia, has been to *avoid micro-management*. Based on its own experiences, a recent US–AEP review recommends that partners “empower, devolve and decentralize” within the collaboration itself, as well as in relation to other participating actors.<sup>30</sup> For further information on US–AEP, visit their web site at <http://www.usaep.org>.

## 5. Accountability

The outlay of resources, whether monetary or technical, as well as shared ownership, often raises the subject of accountability among partners. While each partner is typically accountable to either a board, its constituents, shareholders, and the like, successful partnerships and alliances between the public and private sectors must ensure that procedures for accountability are known and accepted by collaborating agencies at the beginning of the venture. USAID's Onchocerciasis Control Program, for instance, has developed and systematically maintains a structure of internal checks and balances and clear accountability, which it considers to be a major contributor to the success of its partnering relationships.<sup>31</sup>

## 6. Measuring Progress

Partnerships and alliances must, after establishing their initial goals, constantly work to refine the focus of these objectives in order to stay on track. Without a monitoring and evaluation plan it is difficult, if not impossible, for partners to know whether or not their collaborative efforts are in fact meeting the targeted results they have set, or if operational and/or programmatic improvements are needed in order to get back on course.

USAID's International Resource Cities Program (IRCP), which promotes partnerships between local U.S. municipalities and their counterparts in developing and transitioning countries, established early on a series of benchmarks for measuring the progress and effectiveness of its

exchanges. This allows IRCP managers to monitor the results of the program's overall efforts and also to evaluate, in an analytical manner, their progress toward achieving objectives.

## *7. Building Institutional Capacity of Partners*

As was previously mentioned, there will be instances when a partner may not possess the necessary skills, resources, information, and/or technical expertise to uphold their end of a collaborative effort. To resolve this, several USAID partnership activities recommend earmarking funds specifically for institution building, through the provision of technical assistance and training, if necessary.

Another USAID activity recommends operating the partnership according to the strengths of the partners (e.g., to build upon institutional capabilities). Good communication between the partners as to what these strengths (and weaknesses) are facilitates the process of appreciating what each side has to offer and how they can make the most of these differences.

### **Box 4. Utility Partnership Program Builds Local Partners' Capacity**

As one of the first partnerships in the Utility Partnership Program, the Czech Power Works Company (CEZ) and Houston Lighting and Power (HL&P) worked together through the exchange of senior officers and board members to develop corporate capabilities in finance and strategic planning, government relations, and economic development. A primary objective of the partnership, determined early on by CEZ's management board, was to obtain a credit rating enabling CEZ to draw upon financial resources from outside the Czech Republic to finance upgrades in plant and system reliability and environmental performance. With these improvements, CEZ could accelerate its membership with the European Union. As a first step, HL&P assisted CEZ in implementing standardized financial management systems, including the capability to produce reports consistent with international lending requirements. With guidance from HL&P, CEZ presented this information to financial companies in the United States, receiving its first bond rating from Standard and Poor's, BBB. This rating increased CEZ's standing in the international financial community, enabling the utility to attract the necessary financing to mobilize system upgrades.

Collaboration must be viewed as a dynamic process. All partners must continue to build their institutional capacities in order to enable continuous improvement. Activities that combine the distinctive and complementary strengths of the public and private sectors are in fact exposing new ways to achieve institutional growth. For instance, a nonprofit partner may learn new business expertise, whereas a private sector partner might acquire new community relation skills.

In that light, at least one USAID partnership activity, Promoting Financial Investments and Transfers to Involve the Commercial Sector in Family Planning (PROFIT), found that Agency staff themselves were in need of technical training in order to better deal with partners who have more experience in finance and business.<sup>32</sup> The reciprocal benefits of partnering are numerous. To learn more about USAID's PROFIT project, read the Project Compendium at <http://www.cmsproject.com/resources/PDF/PROFIT.pdf>, which includes a summary of

PROFIT's activities, and a collection of the lessons, insights, and recommendations based on the project's experience.

### **Scope of USAID Partnerships and Alliances**

The experience of several Agency multisectoral programs has been that partnerships themselves can be somewhat limited in reaching an expanded audience. Whereas a critical mass of individuals in a single institution may be exposed to new ways of thinking or may access to the latest technology due to their involvement in the partnership, one USAID activity poses the question: How can partnership activities share these types of innovative changes with other nonpartner institutions without taking them through the entire partnership experience?

This was the case with AIHA/Slovakia, in which partnership exchanges penetrated into the collaborating organizations and provided a critical mass of individuals who were directly exposed to a "changed thinking." This was only possible through sufficient exposure to and benefit from the relationship itself.<sup>33</sup> There appears to be limited potential, however, in AIHA's partnership model in fostering extensive changes in other nonpartner institutions throughout Slovakia. In order to renew the health care industry in this country, new programmatic models and individuals with broader perspectives will be needed.

A recent evaluation of AIHA proposed that, in order to broaden the scope of partnerships, USAID should carefully consider the balance between 1) creating more partnerships (i.e., more "seeding" of new kinds of thinkers); and 2) more intensely cultivating existing partnerships.<sup>34</sup> The first would permit the creation of more "new thinkers," whereas the second would allow more evidence of specific programmatic outcomes and better defined "models" for possible replication.<sup>35</sup> This sentiment has been mirrored within the Parks in Peril (PiP) program, which recommended that its implementing agency increase the program's number of partners, as well as urging its larger, urban-based NGO partners to reach out to work more with other local partners that have complementary skills and expertise.<sup>36</sup>

In contrast to activities that may be lacking a broad scope of effectiveness, the US-AEP environmental initiative declares its overall partnership objective as having launched a "clean revolution" that it suspects will reach well beyond Asia. This is based on the program's ability, as a series of joint public-private collaborative efforts, to generate technological change, which it believes has contributed most to the expansion of wealth and productivity in Asia. "Properly channeled," a recent evaluation suggests, "it could well hold the key to environmental sustainability as well. Based on this insight alone, the Partnership is more than just another environmental project -- it is, indeed, the forerunner of a movement."<sup>37</sup>

### **External Factors**

Not only are partners susceptible to being alienated by obvious sectoral differences, as described in the previous pages, but they may be susceptible to other social, legal, and political difficulties, as well. In some cases, USAID partnerships and alliances have discovered unique ways in which to work through these types of barriers. In others, they did not.



Due to an unsteady political environment, for instance, it is not always realistic to expect that host-country governments will have a sustained commitment to partnership or alliance activities. The political situation of a host country might very well curtail a partnership activity. In the case of USAID's Utility Partnership Program, the perceived unstable political climate in the Balkan region precluded one potential partnership from materializing.<sup>38</sup>

Government commitment, as well, whether at the local, regional, or national levels, is important when fostering partnerships and implementing alliances between the public and private sectors. In the case of UNAIDS, which has a broad and challenging mission, progress greatly depends on actions taken by other entities, including other donors, NGOs, the private sector, and national governments.<sup>39</sup> The program's influence is therefore dependent on how effectively it can advocate AIDS causes to others. Several governments in Africa have been slow to respond to the HIV/AIDS crisis,<sup>40</sup> which has significantly affected how effectively this GDA-like activity will be able to achieve its short- and long-term goals in those countries.

Finally, legal mechanisms may also obstruct cooperative agreements between public and private sector partners. For instance, a change in tax laws, which eliminated several tax deductions for donations by profit-making firms, greatly reduced the ability of one USAID project to leverage funds from the private sector. Another partnership activity, the Technology Cooperation Agreement Pilot Project (TCAPP), a component of the US-AEP initiative, recommends a series of actions in order to remove legal or institutional barriers. This includes 1) building high-level support for removing the barrier; 2) investigating and documenting the legal source that identifies the barrier; 3) consulting with local experts and stakeholders in order to draft recommendations; 4) presenting their findings to the agencies that have legal authority to act and enlisting their commitment to undertake any necessary procedures; and 5) designing a systematic way of monitoring the progress of their recommendations.<sup>41</sup>

## **Leveraging Resources**

The international donor community as a whole, including USAID, has been experiencing diminishing resource levels over the past decade. This development strongly suggests the need for resource leveraging strategies to be utilized to the extent that is possible in the future. The fundamental idea behind USAID's GDA model is precisely that—to bring together complementary partner resources in order to achieve common goals.

As the example in the next paragraph indicates, however, there is at least one case in which a USAID activity's strategy to leverage funds from other donors was detrimental to the project's overall objectives. Therefore, while leveraging resources with its public and private sector partners has had, and will continue to have, numerous positive outcomes for the Agency—including reducing overall investment risk to both parties and optimizing synergistic outcomes—USAID has gleaned several important lessons from this innovative strategy.

First, while resources should be leveraged when possible, this should not be at the risk of diluting a program's focus. In the case of the Technical Vocational Education Improvement program (TVE), for instance, which sought to strengthen indigenous science and technology institutions in Latin American and Caribbean countries, evaluators recommended an aggressive leveraging

of funds from other donors. These funds, it was reported, would be welcomed even if the new donors insisted on instituting a method of technical–vocational instruction that deviated from what was already in place. The needs of the project were seen to be so extensive that practically any infusion of capital was considered beneficial,<sup>42</sup> despite the apparent risk to TVE’s overall project priorities.

Second, as was the experience of USAID’s Family Planning Service Expansion and Technical Support project (SEATS), having multiple donors can increase the complexity of a project. SEATS, an Agency family planning service expansion and technical support project, was successful in leveraging resources in support of its programs from local and international sources and from the public, NGO, and commercial sectors. In addition to the obvious sustainability benefits of diversifying its donor base, however, the increased administrative burden of managing multiple funders became significant. Because funds from one donor often flowed through several channels, this clouded channels of communication in different aspects of programmatic and administrative operations.<sup>43</sup> Effectively managing the increased demands can result in added costs to the organization, including those made on management time, and an increase in recurrent costs of upgraded administrative systems and additional staff.<sup>44</sup>

### **Building on Experience**

Several USAID partnership activities report that they did not have successful role models of collaboration on which to build, and they feel that their lack of knowledge in working together actually may have compounded potential problems.

Taking into consideration that there appears to be a collective set of best practices and lessons learned surrounding Agency partnering activities, as has been presented in this document, current and future partnership and alliance activities can gain knowledge from past experiences. Thus, it is important that USAID partnering activities be fully documented and disseminated for application to other relevant programs.

### **Sustainability**

The concept of graduation should apply to partners as well as to Agency missions, reports Parks in Peril.<sup>45</sup> Ensuring sustainability after external funding ends is an important issue, perhaps one that is all too often overlooked in partnership activities. In some cases, it is not clear whether joint activities would continue after funding ends, because the country may not have an adequately developed philanthropic sector or government interest in the issues to support such collaboration. USAID and its public and private partners, therefore, should develop a specific action plan for the phase-out and turnover of operations to cooperating countries and/or stakeholders.

To ensure program sustainability, the Girls Education Program in Guatemala, as just one example, maintains that USAID funds should be used to leverage, but not substitute for, local commitment of resources. This commitment, it is reported, can be increased with the help of a fundraising program and the training of local institutions in fundraising.<sup>46</sup>

## **IV. OVERVIEW OF BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED**

The following best practices and lessons learned have been presented:

- Determine the appropriateness of the partnership/alliance and assess potential partners' capacity and resources
- Create a common agenda by planning early and together
- Develop an operational roadmap, which may include signing a memorandum of understanding
- Build strong partner relationships by:
  - Remaining realistic about partners' differences (sectoral, cultural, etc.)
  - Articulating and trying to understand each other's differences and concerns
  - Building mutual trust, which requires:
    - Allowing time for the relationship to coalesce
    - Maintaining open lines of communication
    - Incorporating inclusive and transparent management practices
- Ensure partner accountability
- Measure and evaluate goals and objectives—at the outset and during the partnership
- Develop and build upon the institutional capacity of partners
- Keep in mind that partnerships are limited in what they can achieve
- Recognize that external factors may hinder partnerships
- Understand that leveraging of resources can dilute the focus of the partnership and add to operational complexities
- Learn from the experiences of past partnerships and alliances—lessons learned and best practices should be documented and disseminated
- Incorporate an action plan for sustaining the benefits of a partnership or alliance after funding ends

## APPENDIX A

### Proposed Search Terms Literature Search for GDA Study

**Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC); USAID Internal and External web sites;  
and Various USAID Alliance Partner web sites**

#### **I. Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC):**

A preliminary literature search of the DEC database will be conducted using the descriptors, search words, and phrases listed below. Whenever possible, combinations of two or more of these search terms will be used in order to arrive at a more targeted search. What follows are several examples of possible combinations:

- \* The descriptors *private sector* and *public sector* (separately) with the descriptor *alliances*;
- \* The descriptor *USAID* with the descriptors *private voluntary organizations* and *alliances*;
- \* The phrase *matching grant* (and separately the descriptor *matching funds*) with the descriptors *USAID* and *private organizations* (and separately with the descriptors *public sector* and *private sector*);
- \* The descriptor *cooperation* (and separately the phrase *strategic alliance*) with the descriptors *USAID* and *private sector* and *public sector*;
- \* The phrase *in cooperation with together* with the descriptor *USAID* and the phrases *public partner(s)* and *private partner(s)*;
- \* The descriptors *universities and colleges* and *USAID* with the word *partnership*;
- \* The descriptors *development cooperation*, *cooperation* and *joint ventures* with the descriptors *USAID*, *private sector*, and *public sector*;
- \* The phrase *collaborate program(s)* with the descriptors *USAID*, *alliances*, and *public/private sector*;
- \* The phrase *technical assistance* and the descriptor *cooperation* with the descriptors *USAID* and *public/private sector*; and
- \* The descriptor *development project management* with the word *partnership(s)* and (separately) the descriptor *alliance*.

#### **Descriptors:**

Alliances  
Partnership status  
Private voluntary organizations  
Indigenous private voluntary organizations  
Development cooperation  
Partnerships  
Public sector  
Private sector  
Private organizations  
Cooperation

Institutional linkages  
Universities and colleges  
Joint development projects  
Joint ventures  
Development project management  
Development administration  
Donor coordination  
USAID  
Matching funds  
Cooperative development organizations

**Words:**

Public-private  
Private-public  
Alliance(s)  
Partner(s)  
Partnering  
Partnership(s)  
In-kind  
Leverage (-ing) (-ed)  
Eco-link(s)  
Initiative(s)

**Phrases:**

Private partner(s)  
Public partner(s)  
Private partnership(s)  
Public partnership(s)  
Partnership initiative(s)  
Matching fund(s)  
Matching grant(s)  
Challenge grant(s)  
Collaborative program(s)  
Collaborative research  
In cooperation with  
Interagency partnership  
Intersectoral partnership  
Best practices (link with words/phrases, such as ‘partnership(s)’, ‘collaborative program(s),’ etc.)  
Technical assistance  
Strategic alliance  
Private voluntary organizations (link with USAID)

## **II. USAID Internal and External Web Sites:**

**Global Development Alliance web site** – <http://www.usaid.gov/gda/>

**Office of Private and Voluntary Cooperation** – [http://www.usaid.gov/hum\\_response/pvc/](http://www.usaid.gov/hum_response/pvc/)

**Office of Development Partners** – <http://www.inside.usaid.gov/PPC/dp/devpart.html>

**New Partnership Initiative web site** – <http://www.inside.usaid.gov/PPC/dp/npi.html>

**Intersectoral Partnering: Internet Sites** – <http://www.usaid.gov/pubs/isp/links.html>

**USAID Higher Education Community Partnership** –

[http://www.usaid.gov/pubs/ads/pps/higher\\_ed/](http://www.usaid.gov/pubs/ads/pps/higher_ed/)

### **Regional Bureau web sites**

Africa (internal): <http://www.inside.usaid.gov/AFR/>

Africa (external): <http://www.usaid.gov/regions/afr/>

ANE (internal): <http://www.inside.usaid.gov/ANE/>

ANE (external): <http://www.usaid.gov/regions/ane/>

E&E (internal): <http://www.inside.usaid.gov/EE/>

E&E (external): [http://www.usaid.gov/regions/europe\\_eurasia/](http://www.usaid.gov/regions/europe_eurasia/)

LAC (internal): <http://www.inside.usaid.gov/LAC/>

LAC (external): <http://www.usaid.gov/regions/lac/>

### **Individual Mission web sites**

**RFNet** - <http://www.rfnet.org/>

## **III. Various USAID Alliance Partner web sites:**

**US-AEP** – <http://www.usaep.org>

**The Alliance to Save Energy** –

[http://www.ase.org/programs/international/index.htm#Energy\\_Efficiency\\_Industry\\_Partnership](http://www.ase.org/programs/international/index.htm#Energy_Efficiency_Industry_Partnership)

**Chocolate and Coffee Production and Distribution Alliances** –

[http://www.usaid.gov/economic\\_growth/coffeemou/sbc\\_notice.htm](http://www.usaid.gov/economic_growth/coffeemou/sbc_notice.htm)

**United States Energy Association (USAE) Partnership Program** –

<http://www.usea.org/default.htm>

**Vitamin A Initiative** – [http://www.usaid.gov/pop\\_health/cs/csvita.htm](http://www.usaid.gov/pop_health/cs/csvita.htm)

**Global Technology Network** – <http://www.usgtn.org>

**Global Climate Change Initiative** – [http://www.usaid.gov/environment/climate\\_change.html](http://www.usaid.gov/environment/climate_change.html)

**American International Health Alliance (AIHA)** – <http://www.aiha.com>

**Eastern Europe Partnership for Environmentally Sustainable Economies (Eco-links)** –

<http://www.ecolinks.org>

**The Millennium Alliance for Social Investment** – <http://www.millennium-alliance.org/>

**TechnoServe Alliances for Rural Economic Growth (TechnoServe)** –

<http://www.technoserve.org/index.htm>

## **APPENDIX B**

### **MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE SPECIALTY COFFEE INSTITUTE**

#### **I. PURPOSE AND SCOPE**

The United States Agency for International Development (“USAID”) and the Specialty Coffee Institute (“SCI”), the tax-exempt education and research foundation of the Specialty Coffee Association of America, (“the Parties”) share the goals of promoting environmentally sound coffee production for small-holder farmers and farmer organizations in developing countries; increasing investments in such production; and improving the quality of coffee produced for export. The Parties also share the goal of promoting private-sector approaches that are environmentally friendly, socially just and economically sustainable.

The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding (“MOU”) is to set forth the understandings and intentions of the Parties with regard to these shared goals. The Parties specifically acknowledge that this MOU is not an obligation of funds, nor does it constitute a legally binding commitment by any Party.

#### **II. IMPLEMENTATION**

To achieve the purposes of this MOU, the Parties, individually and subject to the availability of funds, will jointly cooperate on technical assistance and technology transfer, research, and investment in production and marketing efforts that benefit small-holder farmers, farmer organizations and coffee producers in developing countries.

Specific joint efforts of the Parties will include:

- The mutual exchange of information and data on specific sectoral activities – except that deemed privileged or proprietary;
- The coordination of technical assistance, research and other activities involving eligible beneficiaries’ coffee production, shipping, handling and processing;
- Promoting environmentally friendly resource management practices by small farmers;
- Meeting periodically at the request of either Party to share experiences and lessons learned and to facilitate the transmission of “best practices” to regional and country-level partners;
- Cooperation on testing and implementation of verification and certification systems that monitor and measure the impact, effectiveness, and sustainability of activities; and

- Sharing information on opportunities that may arise for collaboration with other donors and entities that may leverage resources invested by the Parties.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the undersigned Parties have agreed:

**SCI:**

**USAID:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Douglas Carpenter,**  
**Chairman, Board of Trustees, Specialty**  
**Coffee Institute (SCI)**  
**Authorized Representative for SCI**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**J. Brady Anderson,**  
**Administrator, USAID**  
**Authorized Representative for USAID**

\_\_\_\_\_ Date

\_\_\_\_\_ Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Ted Lingle,**  
**Trustee, Specialty Coffee Institute (SCI)**  
**Authorized Representative for SCI**

\_\_\_\_\_ Date

For more information on the alliance between USAID and The Specialty Coffee Institute, go to:  
[http://www.usaid.gov/economic\\_growth/coffeemou/sbc\\_notice.htm](http://www.usaid.gov/economic_growth/coffeemou/sbc_notice.htm)



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